

Spectrum

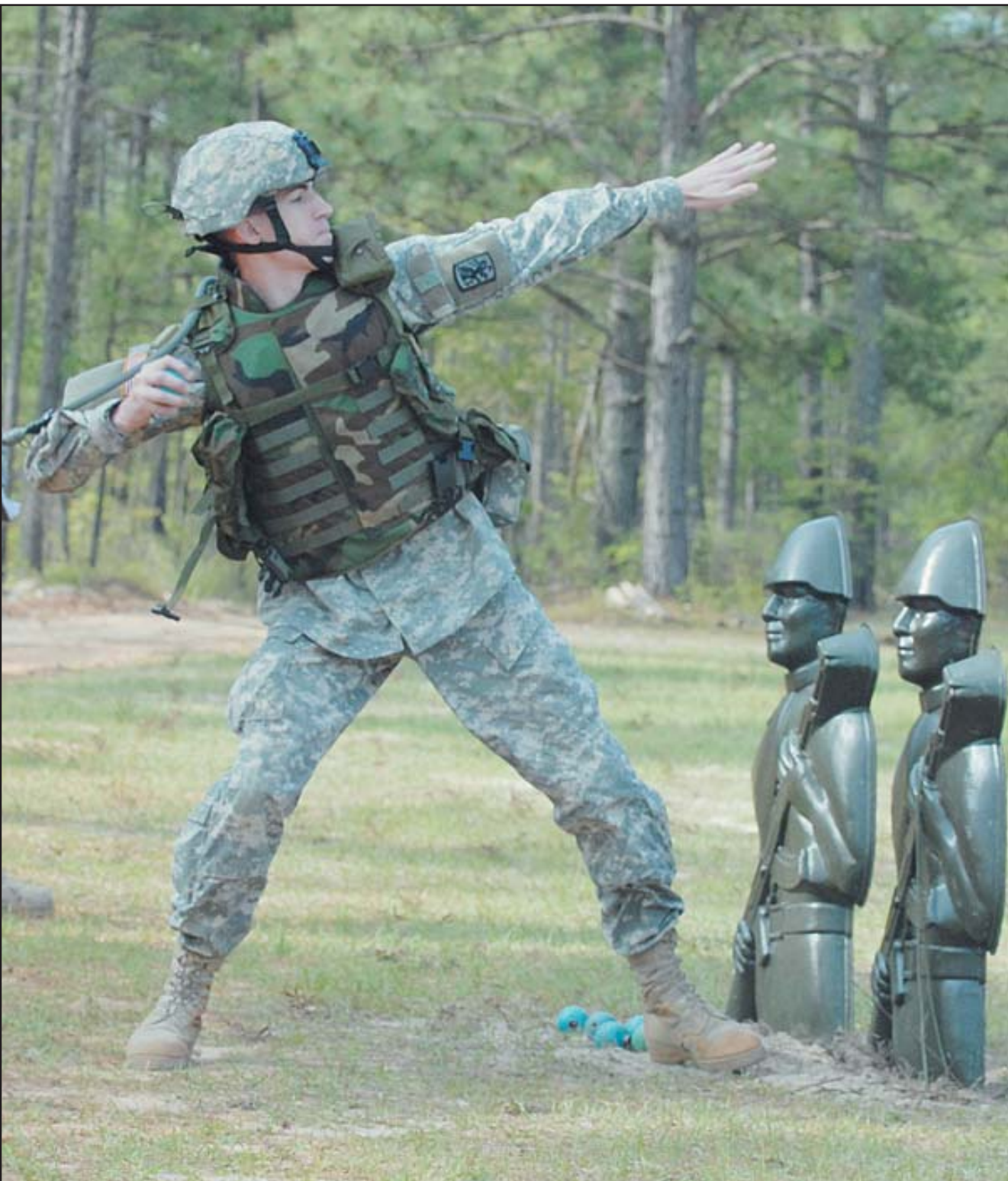
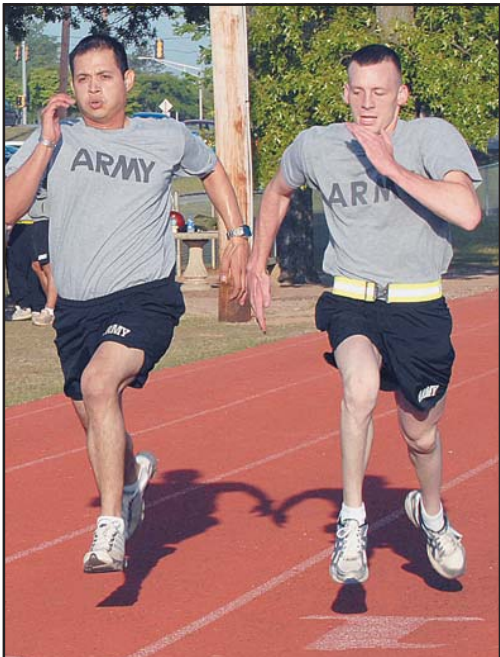


Photo by Staff Sgt. Jamie Menard

(Left) Sgt. Stephen Maynard, with B Co. 324th Integrated Tactical Signal Battalion in Fort Gordon, employs a grenade during his Warrior Task Training portion of the Best Warrior Competition. (Below) Sgt. Kurt Rosell, the junior-level ‘Best Warrior’ for the 359th Signal Brigade and the overall competition with C Co., 392nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion in Baltimore, Md., uses his compass to navigate a point during the land navigation testing of the ‘Best Warrior’ Competition April 24-26 at Fort Gordon.



Photos by 1st Lt. Michelle Lunato



(Left) Sgt. Francisco Gutierrez, the noncommissioned officer-level ‘Best Warrior’ for the 650th Regional Support Group and the overall competition who is a supply sergeant with Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 98th Integrated Tactical Signal Battalion in Belton, Mo., stretches out the finish of his 2-mile run next to Sgt. Kevin Corder, a system team chief with the A. Co., 310th Tactical Signal Battalion in Sacramento, Ca.

Best Warrior competition tests Soldiers’ battlefield readiness

By 1st Lt. Michelle Lunato
359th Signal Brigade Public Affairs

Soldiers today have to be more than one dimensional rifle-men on the battlefield. As the battlefields have changed, Soldiers are now expected to be physically fit, technically proficient, and able to react to a multitude of situations quickly. Developing this new multi-faceted Soldier takes time, and finding the best of the best, takes a competition. To find that Soldier, the 335th Signal Command, an Army Reserve command headquartered in East Point, Ga., held their annual Best Warrior Competition at Fort Gordon April 24-26. The competition, hosted by the 359th Signal Brigade, which is located on post, had 18 Reserve competitors from nine states. The Soldiers came from the 335th and its brigades: the 415th Chemical Brigade, the 209th Regional Support Group, the 650th Regional Support Group and the 359th Signal Brigade. The three-day competition covered an array of skills ranging from weapons qualification to essay writing and a military board in full Class A uniform. This is a big difference from the past, said Command Sgt. Maj. Jennifer Dehorty, 359th Sig. Bde. command sergeant major. “If you look back 20 years ago, we just went to a board. That was the competition. Today, it is the total Soldier.” Considering the Army transformation, since Sept. 11, 2001 and the changes the Army Reserve has made entering its second century, it is not a surprise that the competition has become more rigorous, said Col. Mark Hunt, 359th Sig. Bde. commander. “Just as the Army and the Army Reserve have evolved, this competition has evolved.” In this day and age, Soldiers need to do more than fire their

weapons accurately. They need to be healthy, be able to navigate safely and think quickly on their feet, said Hunt. “This competition shows all the skill sets Soldiers need on the battlefield – we want well-rounded Soldiers.” The Soldiers competing understood the value of having a variety of skills at their finger tips. “These things are so important,” said Pfc. Genesis Miner, a chemical specialist with A Co., 98th Integrated Tactical Signal Battalion, which is located in Wainai, Hawaii. “The basic skills will save you if your equipment fails.” Practice and more practice are critical to knowing what to do when things get heated or equipment breaks, said competitor Sgt. Kurt Rosell, a communications shop section sergeant with C Co., 392nd Integrated Signal Battalion, which is located in Baltimore, Md. Testing Soldiers on Warrior Task Training “keeps it fresh in your mind. So when you have to do it, it is second nature.” Showing that they knew their Soldier skills were not the only motivation for the competitors though. Many of them said they just wanted to do right by their units. “This is what we do. This is our job. I just want to make my unit look good. That is the most important thing to me,” said Spc. Joshua Pierce, a chemical operations specialist with the 310th Chemical Company in Greenville, S.C. Being selected by their units to compete also gave many of the Best Warrior candidates the feeling of satisfaction. “I am proud and honored because this competition sets us apart from the rest of the Soldiers and shows that my unit has confidence in me,” said Pvt. Michael Cannon, a chaplain’s assistant with Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 324th IT Sig. Bn. on post. There were prizes beyond the bragging rights. And for some competitors, that was even more motivation to push themselves a

little harder. “The ESS [Eye Safety Systems, Inc.] goggles are cool,” said Rosell. “I am doing this whole competition for those goggles,” he said with a laugh. Most of the Soldiers agreed that it took a lot to prepare for the competition. As Reservists, Soldiers need to be self motivated, said Cpl. Glen Galas, a Signal team chief with B. Co., 319th IS Bn. in Dublin, Ga. It is important for Soldiers to “work on their PT [physical fitness] regularly, brush up on their WTT [Warrior Task Training], and read the Army Study Guide.” That is all easier said than done, stated Galas who is balancing a civilian job, being newlywed and preparing for his first baby all while training for the competition. Win or lose, the Best Warrior Competition was fun and challenging, said Staff Sgt. James Selesnick, a combat camera non-commissioned officer with the 982nd Combat Camera Co. in Wilson, N.C. “Regardless of if you come in first, it is a good way to focus your energy, brush up on your skills and test yourself.” Stepping up to the challenge of representing their units and assessing their own expertise was just one step to being more prepared for a deployment, said many of the competitors. Pierce said the competition helped him be more equipped for deploying later this year, which he looks forward to. “That [deploying] is what I am supposed to do. It is an honor to defend my country...I just want to serve my country like I said I was going to do.” Whether competing for the Best Warrior title or preparing for a deployment, Cannon said that all Soldiers should avoid the temptations of slacking off. “It is not our slogan anymore, but you should always be all that you can be.” The two overall winners will compete in the Army Reserve Command Best Warrior Competition at Fort McCoy, Wis. in July. See <http://www.usarc.army.mil/ncoy-soy/> for more information. Winners from this competition will go on to Fort Lee, Va. in September for the Department of the Army Best Warrior title.



(Above) A Soldier competing in the Best Warrior Competition at Fort Gordon on April 24-26 plots his point for the land navigation testing. (Right) Cpl. Glen Galas, with B Co. 319th Integrated Signal Battalion in Dublin, Ga., pushes himself during a physical fitness test that was part of the 335th Signal Command’s competition.



Competition Winners

209th Regional Support Group Soldier – Pvt. Matthew Parks, HHC, 209th Regional Support Group, Belton, Mo.;
NCO – Sgt. Daryl Hale, HHC 209th RSG Belton, Mo.

359th Signal Brigade – Sgt. Kurt Rosell, C Co., 392nd Integrated Tactical Signal Battalion, Baltimore Md. ; **NCO** – Staff Sgt. James Selesnick, 982nd Combat Camera Co., Wilson, N.C.

415th Chemical Brigade Soldier – Spc. Andrew Churchill, HHD, 92nd Chemical Battalion, Decatur, Ga.

650th Regional Support Group – Pfc. Juanita Minor, A Co, 98th Integrated Tactical Signal Battalion, Waianae, Hawaii; **NCO** – Sgt. Francisco Gutierrez, HHC, 98th Integrated Tactical Signal Battalion, Mesa, Ariz.

335th Overall Soldier – Sgt. Kurt Rosell
335th Overall NCO – Sgt. Francisco Gutierrez